

SPIRITUAL TRAITS THAT AFFECT THE LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE – REFLECTION FROM VIDURA NEETI

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual traits are characteristics shown by individuals that are fundamental to their development of our inner being for achieving happiness, peace and fulfillment. Organizations are constantly on the lookout for leaders who display good performance. Performance of an individual is dependent on various factors starting from the self, the organizational context he is working under, his team members and the customer/ stakeholders who need to be satisfied with the outcome. In this paper, we provide a qualitative analysis of how people with high spiritual traits display leadership performance based on lessons from Vidura Neeti. A spiritually sound organization can look for these traits in new hires for long term sustenance.

Key words: Vidura Neeti. Spirituality, Spiritual leadership, Work performance, Spiritual Traits

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ancient Indian philosophers and leaders gave a lot of importance to leadership performance. A bad leader is not merely a single bad person, but is responsible for a perennial damage and leads others to have a bad fate. Maharshi Veda Vyasa, the author of the holy Mahabharatha [1], a multidimensional indu epic, dedicates a full chapter called “PrajaagaraParva” to discuss about an extraordinarily knowledgeable and wise character named “Vidura”. “Vidyaratheviduronaama” – The name Vidura was coined since this character personifies someone who is always on the thirst of Knowledge. He discusses that it is the spiritual traits that adorn a true leader which without double delivers fruits.

Vidura, a wise character in the history of Ancient India provides a deeper analysis of why a certain detrimental character is depicted by such bad persons. Having adorned the position of a responsible Prime minister of the Kuru dynasty, he tries his best to educate the King Dhritarashtra who tries to get out of balance due to miseries of his bad son Duryodhana and gets inclined in supporting their jealous intentions.

A lot of theoretical framework came for understanding peak experiences by combining the development psychology of west with the growth of higher consciousness or enlightenment as explained in the true Vedic knowledge of India [Harald 2012 - 12]. It was felt that a deeper study of reflection from cultural roots in the eastern philosophies would guide in gaining competitive advantage. Additionally the western management thoughts have found that eastern philosophies have a lot to add due to the fact that their history is vast and reflection of the past would provide innovative and yet simple thoughts to leaders in improving their leadership performance.

Vidura mentions that a Leader's basic duties are:

- To Strive for the prosperity of all his subjects.
- Will look after people who are in distress.
- Is kind to all human beings, irrespective of their cadre.
- Will never impede the growth and development socio-economic activity in his organization.
- Is always ready to protect those who are dependent on him.
- He overcomes the trap of lust and extinguishes anger.
- He ensures that wealth is distributed to deserving recipients.
- He is discriminative, knowledgeable and earns respect.
- He who desires success in matters connected with worldly profit should practice virtue from the beginning.
- Prosperity takes its birth in good deeds.
- A leader must avoid the friendship of the sinful
- A leader should not misuse wealth of his organization
- A leader should be soft spoken and avoid harshness of speech
- He should have good sense of control.

Here we discuss how the above duties are linked to spiritual traits and have an impact on leader's performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Louis W. Fry et al [2] discussed issues regarding workplace spirituality due to its increased attention in the organizational sciences. The implications of workplace spirituality for leadership theory, research, and practice make this a fast growing area of new research and inquiry by scholars. He tested the dynamic relationship between spiritual leadership and spiritual wellbeing and key organizational outcomes in a sample of emerging military leaders. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), results revealed a positive and significant relationship between spiritual leadership and several unit-level outcomes, including organizational commitment and four measures of performance.

A four factor model of Spiritual Intelligence is proposed by David [3]. He begins with an 84- Item Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI) in Study 1 with a 619 undergraduates. A series of exploratory factor analyses leads to a reduced 39-item scale. Study 2 starts with 305 undergraduates and involved a confirmatory factor analysis which resulted in the removal of additional scale items in order to obtain adequate model fit. The

final version of scale, the SISRI-24, displays excellent internal reliability and good fit to the proposed four factor model of spiritual Intelligence.

Kinjerski & Skrypnuk [4] present an empirically grounded, human ecological model of spirit at work specifying antecedent conditions and outcomes of spirit at work. Four distinct paths to spirit at work are identified: always there, coming together, transformative event, and contextually sensitive. These paths are affected by individual factors and contextual factors that contribute to the experience of spirit at work.

Chakraborty et al [5] explored to greater detail that Spirituality pervades every sphere, be it business, management, governance, health care, or any other secular engagements. Many illustrations are provided from history of spiritually inspired leadership practices that provide positive inspiration to the Indian business and everyday life. The Spiritual experiences that lead to immense leadership performance of some TOP CEO's to historically prominent characters like Harshavardhana, Kautilya, Kalidasa and Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita are quoted here.

Dong Levinick, Fred Kiel[6] indicate that four principles are vital for personal and organizational success. Each individual in an organization looks for success and a milestone for his or her career. Every job that is done will have innumerable challenges and the key lies in how it is delivered to its customers – Internal and external – and makes all its stakeholders successful.

3. GAPS IN THE STUDY

In all the above literature, while spiritual traits have been discussed at different levels with different types of target segment, there is no mention as how it could be traced back to its root. In the wake of economic crisis in the world, companies from the emerging economies are among the leaders in the growth and innovation and there is a transition phase from “West leads East” to ‘West meets East’ [7].

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is a step toward understanding and introspecting Vidura Neeti that reflect and enrich a leader’s performance. We design:

- A model to analyze Spiritual traits of a leader as propounded by Mahatma Vidura.
- Compare and contrast characters based on reflection from Vidura Neeti.
- List the spiritual attributes that contribute to modern day leadership

5. METHODOLOGY

In the proposed model we discuss the conceptual way in which spiritual traits affect the Leadership performance in Indian IT Sectors.

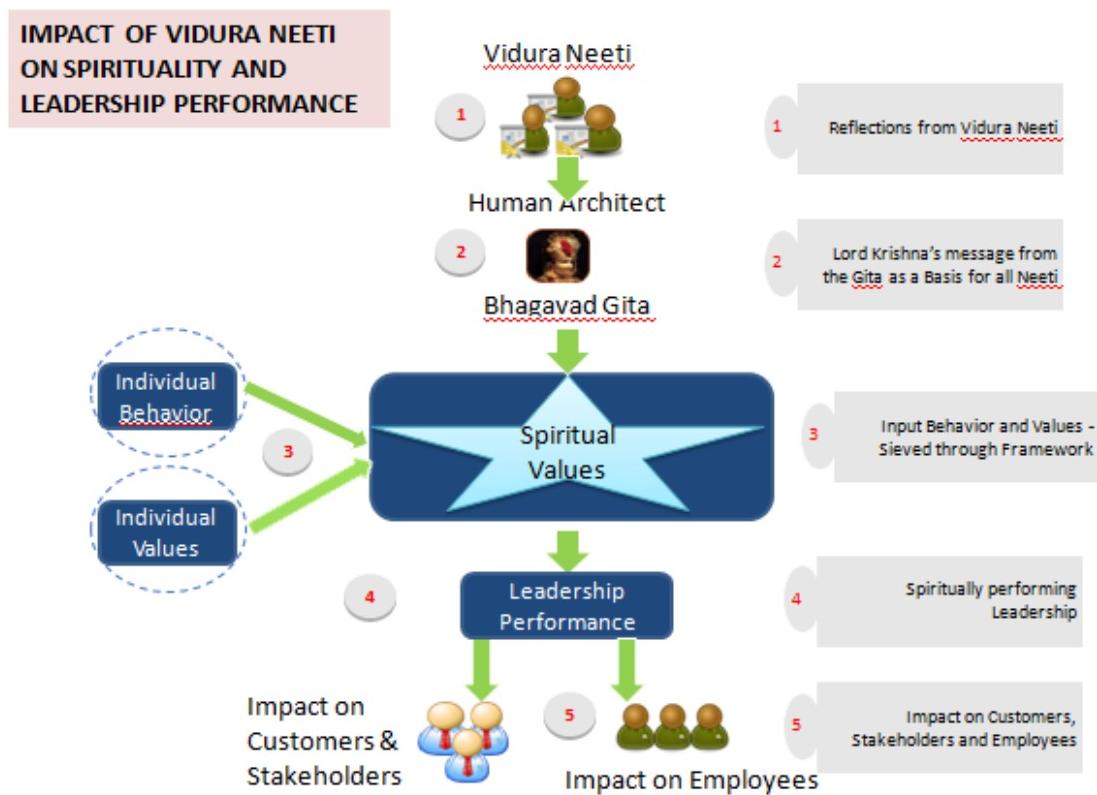


Figure 1 Proposed model showing the impact of Vidura Neeti

5.1. Compare and Contrast Characters and Reflection from Vidura Neeti

Table 1 Reflection from Vidura Neeti

Sl. No	Spiritual Leader characteristics (Personification of the character of Vidura)	Disturbed person seeking spiritual lessons from leader (Dhrutarashtra)	Reflection: What a spiritual leader should avoid and follow to be highly effective and performing
1	Highly knowledgeable, more than Bheeshmacharya	Supports unethical acts of his bad sons	Avoid the company of sinful person: A person doing unethical acts which is detrimental to the society
2	Always interested in Wisdom	Always has soft corner to his blood relations and is highly partial.	Never be constrained by blood relations to have soft corners. Be always objective in decisions. Should be impartial
3	Beloved of Lord Krishna	Always does not want to counter his son's bad acts, although highly condemnable	Condemn bad acts irrespective of who did it.
4	Always stayed at the background and tried to guide the king and subjects with the right	Unable to guide or control his sons and preferred Paandavaas to behave as required by his sons.	Never be cruel or crooked in acts. Because of Vidura Pandavas escaped through the underground tunnel.

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	conduct	Responsible for sending the Pandavas to Camphor like house.	
5	Simplicity- Being a PM, always behaved like an ordinary human being	Sleeplessness: Who is sleepless? Gives the depth and breadth of this character which a leader should avoid- a. One who has coveted the wealth of others like a thief always stays awake in night and is sleepless. b. One who has lost all his wealth including his shelter c. Lustful person – Heavily indulged in illicit sex	Avoid the reasons for sleeplessness
6	Humbleness- Never misused his position and stamped his superiors. He was respected by all and had the highest portfolio.	Impatient	Should always avoid to be impatient.
7	Upheld the dharma/ Righteousness	Forced to Support Adharma	Ready to sacrifice bad qualities or persons to protect good qualities or persons.
8	Stood up to strongly condemn any bad events that came to his notice. He strongly protested unethical acts and if beyond control, staged a walkout, irrespective of who did the act – He called a spade a spade and did not care about the consequence. Was cognizant of the fact that he worked in a kingdom where he was looked down due to his candid nature.	Never condemned any bad events or acts from his children due to attachment.	Dhrutarastra is a concept that we need to peel out of ourselves and instill the concept of Vidura Neethi in us. When such a noble character like Vidura was belittled by Duryodhana, he kept down his bow/ arrow and left the kingdom. He left a message that having served the kingdom, they need not have fear that he will come back and conquer
9	Kindness to all creatures.	Kind only for his bad sons	We need to be kind to everyone irrespective of caste and cadre
10	Wishing good and prosperity of all	Only wishing good and prosperity of his bad sons	We have to wish the prosperity of all . "Sarve Janaha Sukino Bavantru"
11	Never set his heart on the misery of his subjects	Always set his heart on the misery of his subjects	Do Not be weakened to any aspect of life
12	Looked after people who have fallen into adversity and are in distress	Never looked after people who have fallen into adversity and are in distress	Always look after the people who are in distress
13	Always ready to protect those dependent on him.	Never protected his dependants , Pandavas	Always protect the people who are dependent on you
14	Renounces lust and anger,	Always in lust and anger,	Overcome lust and anger.

	who bestows wealth upon proper recipients and who is discriminative	never bestows wealth upon Pandavas	Reward the person who excel his performance
15	Critical traits are Simplicity, Truthfulness, Self-restraint, Patience, Honesty, Charity, steadiness, Humility, Faith, Exertion, Forbearance, Sweetness in speech and Good company.	All these critical traits were missing	Try to cultivate the critical traits in our day to day life
16	Always abide by his words and showed in action. His behavior was not out of his words.	Never abide by his words for Pandavas	Walk the talk
17	Always sets a example for others to follow like Lord Rama	Never sets a example for others to follow by always listening to Shakuni and Kauravas	We always have to set a good example within the society with our good deeds
18	Attained Salvation by going on a pilgrimage, met holy saints at the holy Ganges, got the eternal message from Lord Krishna.	Even after losing all his 100 sons he never realized his ill deeds . Finally Vidura guided him to attain Salvation	We need to get the eternal message from Lord almighty during our last days.
19	He knew that Dhrutarastra, after losing all his 100 sons will realize his ill deeds. So after the Kurukshetra war, he decided to come back not to rule, although offered a red carpet welcome by the Pandavas but to utter wise words to the king and his companions.	After the Kurukshetra war, he decided to stay with Pandavas to lead luxurious life he had earlier	Whether you have money or not, power or not always follow the path of Dharma and be humble at every stage of our life
20	Like a spiritual enlightened soul, he cautioned the king that he had no right to stay at a place where he was treated like a dog and took them back for pilgrimage.	Even after losing his 100 sons to Bheema, he took shelter at Pandavas and continued to live with them	Vidura enlightened Dhrutarastra to leave the kingdom and not live like a dog.
21	He was followed by Mother Kunti, the pearl of Pandavas, Gandhari and attained salvation.	He and his wife had no other option but to lead the life of a dog due to misdeeds.	Finally the wrong have to realize that no one is permanent here. It is only the good deeds that follow one and nothing else

5.2. Attributes for Mapping of Vidura Neeti to Modern day Leadership Behavior

Table 2 Spiritual attributes from Vidura Neeti

Sl. No.	Spiritual traits (Attributes)	Sl. No.	Spiritual traits (Attributes)
1	Be Highly knowledgeable	9.	Wishing good and prosperity of all
2	Always interested in Wisdom	10.	Never set his heart on the misery of his subjects
3	Beloved of Almighty	11.	Looked after his team who have fallen into adversity and are in distress
4	Always stayed at the background to guide the Organization and subjects with the right conduct	12.	Always ready to protect those dependent on him.
5	Simplicity and Humbleness	13.	overcomes lust and anger
6	Upheld the Dharma/ Righteousness	14.	Critical traits are Simplicity, Truthfulness, Self-restraint, Patience, Honesty, Charity, steadiness, Humility, Faith, Exertion, Forbearance, Sweetness in speech and Good company.
7	Stood up to strongly condemn any bad events that came to his notice.	15.	Always abide by his words and show in action.
8	Kindness to all creatures.		

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Ancient Indian history has a wealth of contribution to Spirituality and reinstates successful leadership Behavior. The qualities of a spiritual leader are well explained by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita, which is the quaint essence of Mahabharatha. Mahatma Vidura, a personified character of spiritual leadership in Mahabharata, has exemplified these qualities to a greater detail. The concept of spiritual leadership has strong theoretical ground. These attributes have a strong correlation with the spiritual leadership.

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